Technology

How to Avoid Being Zoom-bombed — Videoconferencing Options

BY DANIEL J. SIEGEL

Before the pandemic and the resulting months of quarantine, few attorneys knew much about video or web conferencing, and most had probably never heard of Zoom. That changed quickly when bar associations, courts, and law firms suddenly recognized that in-person hearings and meetings were no longer an option and needed an easy-to-use alternative. Because it is easy to use, Zoom became the platform of choice during, and most likely after, the pandemic.

That Zoom had security concerns seemed of no concern. It seemed like everyone used it, and when techno-geeks like me warned of the dangers of insecure videoconference platforms, most lawyers ignored us.

And after all, what could possibly happen?

Then came Zoom-bombing; the term that became synonymous with unwanted intrusions during videoconferences.

Actually, a lot can happen if your videoconferencing platform is not secure. According to Norton, one of the major vendors of security software, videoconferencing apps can leave users vulnerable to security and privacy breaches. To avoid these dangers, users of Zoom and other similar apps must take additional precautions to keep malware, hackers, Zoom-bombers, and others out of your conferences and out of your and your clients'

personal information. Doing so will also help attorneys comply with their ethical obligations to maintain the confidentiality of client data and other sensitive information.

The first place to start is the National Security Agency (NSA), which has an informative website outlining in plain English how to protect against malicious cyber actors. The site, at https://www.nsa.gov/News-Features/News-Stories/Article-View/Article/2163484/working-from-home-select-and-use-collaboration-services-more-securely/, also includes links to NSA's excellent guide, "Selecting and Safely Using Collaboration Services for Telework." The guide includes NSA's analysis of the security of various videoconferencing platforms and is a must-read.

In addition, all videoconference users, and particularly those persons and entities hosting these conferences, should employ the following security features:

- Comply with all of your firm's policies, including its BYOD (Bring Your Own Device Policy);
- Require a password for all meeting participants;
- Do not embed password links in meeting invitations;
- Do not post meeting links in public places;
- Utilize a "waiting room" feature

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to confirm that only authorized attendees are in the meeting;

- Disable any "join before host" features;
- Use secure Wi-Fi, not public Internet connections;
- Train hosts how to run meetings, including "mute," "hold," and other meeting controls;
- Use strong passwords or two- or multi-factor authentication;
- Establish and enforce expectations, among all participants, about whether the conference will be videotaped or audiotaped and whether screenshots are permissible;
- Practice webcam awareness; that is, be cognizant of who is on your call, and do not expose unnecessary parts of your home to others; and,
- Ensure that all users and videoconference participants have strong endpoint protection.

There are also many alternatives to Zoom, many of which provide enhanced levels of security, including (listed alphabetically):

- Adobe Connect[1] – a paid service known for its security;
- eVoice Meet[2] – a new product from a company long known for other services;
- Free Conference Call[3] – a free service from a longtime provider of free audioconferencing;
- Google Hangouts[4] – An easy-to-use platform from Google, usually for personal use;
- Google Meet[5] – part of the G Suite of business products;
- GoToMeeting[6] – a popular product from LogMeIn, which also offers GoToWebinar;
- Jitsi Meet[7] – a secure and free open-source product that can be customized for a user's needs;
- Microsoft Teams[8] – a secure product that is part of the Microsoft 365 Suite (previously known as Office 365);
- ON24[9] – a conferencing product with numerous options and customizations;
- Skype[10] – Microsoft's alternative to Teams, some users still use Skype for Business;
- WebEx[11] – a secure product from Cisco, which makes numerous security products.

My advice is to try those you already have (for example, most firms using Microsoft Office 365 will already have Teams), and one or two others, and see which meets your needs and your budget.

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1 https://www.adobe.com/products/adobeconnect.html
2 https://meet.evoice.com/
3 https://www.freeconferencecall.com/video-conferencing
4 https://hangouts.google.com
5 https://gsuite.google.com/products/meet
6 https://www.gotomeeting.com
7 https://meet.jit.si
8 https://teams.microsoft.com
9 https://www.on24.com
10 https://www.skype.com
11 https://www.webex.com

Daniel J. Siegel (dan@danieljsiegel.com), a member of the Editorial Board of The Philadelphia Lawyer, is the principal of the Law Offices of Daniel J. Siegel.

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